



BULLETIN

Hartford Seminary Foundation

MARCH 1960

NUMBER 28

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RELIGIOUS LIBERALISM AND THE TOTALITARIAN SITUATION

By PETER L. BERGER

The claim has been made by religious conservatives that their position is the one that shows most resilience in dealing with totalitarian states. By contrast, it is then maintained that religious liberalism falls an easy prey to totalitarian ideologies, supposedly because liberalism does not have the bedrock of a conservative theology to stand on. Especially the history of the Protestant churches in Germany under the Nazi regime has been used as an argument along these lines. It is argued that Protestant liberals succumbed easily to Nazi ideological encroachments, while the conservatives (or, perhaps, neo-conservatives), holding fast to the firm foundation of the Lutheran and Reformed confessions, came through the storm unscathed. We would like to suggest here that this is an over-simplification. Indeed, an investigation of the historical data would rather point in a direction less comforting to the conservatives.¹

The terms "liberal" and "conservative" are not only very susceptible to rousing theological furor, but they are subject to a good many dif-

ferent interpretations. Thus in wide segments of American Protestantism the term "liberal" might be part of a dichotomy with the term "fundamentalist", while in Germany the term may be used to set off theological trends derived from the critical tradition of the 19th century. It may help the discussion if, for the purposes of this argument, the two terms be defined more sharply and in a manner that is theologically neutral.

"Liberalism" and "conservatism", quite apart from any particular theological content, may be defined in terms of particular relations with the "world". The term "world" is used here, without any value judgment, to denote the "profane" society as seen from within the church. In other words, the term is used phenomenologically. The same can be done with the terms "liberalism" and "conservatism". Liberalism may be defined as an attitude of relative openness to the world on the part of the church, conservatism as an attitude of relative closedness. Intellectually this implies, on the part of liberalism, an intensive, sometimes eager exchange of ideas between the religious tradition within the church and the broad movements of thought in the larger, secular society. Often this exchange is actually a reconstruction of the religious tradition in terms of secular ideas. The intellectual position of conservatism, on the other hand, consists of an attitude of defensiveness and separation *vis-a-vis* the world, a deliberate maintenance of an intellectual universe set apart from the thought worlds of the present.

Advantage of Definitions

It is not claimed here, of course, that these definitions possess universal applicability. They have the advantage, however, of being purely formal in character. As a result, they may be helpful in clarifying a problem recurring under varying historical circumstances and involving very different religious content. We would like to follow through a comparison of the Nazi case with two other cases, the one involving the fate of the Russian Orthodox church under the Soviet regime, the other involving the struggle between the Prussian government and the Roman Catholic church during the *Kulturkampf* of the 1870's, an odd and highly illuminating preview of things to come. Needless to say, this article cannot pretend even to give an outline of these historical developments, but will have to limit itself to a discussion of certain common features of these three cases.

The new Nazi regime came into conflict with segments of German

Protestantism almost immediately after its accession to power in 1933. This conflict between state and church has come to be called the German church struggle, or *Kirchenkampf*.² Sometimes this term is restricted to the Protestant side, sometimes its use includes the difficulties that developed also between the Roman Catholic church and the Nazi government.

"Positive Christianity"

The Nazi party program had declared its support of what it termed "positive Christianity", a phrase which, understandably, was interpreted in different ways. The church leaders of the established provincial churches interpreted this as meaning basically that the Nazi regime would continue the traditional German relationships between church and state. One group within the Protestant churches, however, took the position that the church itself would have to reform itself in accordance with the dynamics of the Nazi revolution. With the support of state and party, this group, calling itself the "German Christians", attempted to take over the administration of the various provincial churches. It was in direct opposition to the "German Christians", not to Nazism as such, that the so-called Confessing Church movement came into being. It never was a political resistance against the Nazi state, but an ecclesiastical party opposing the "German Christians" in their operations within the church area. Meanwhile the large bulk of the German church leadership and clergy sat somewhere in the middle between these two extremes.

In terms of our concepts, the "German Christians" represented a liberal movement. Nor is this an arbitrary superimposition on the facts. Most of the leadership of the "German Christians" came from the liberal tradition of German theology. Here was an openness to the world which quite naturally followed along with the revolution that was shaking the secular society. By contrast, the Confessing Church, as already implied in its self-chosen title, was a party of conservative adherence to the traditional Protestant confessions, rejecting violently the idea that the church could be reformed in accordance with the secular revolution. It is important to stress that this opposition of the Confessing Church was not based at all on any political contradiction of Nazi ideology, though, of course, individuals within the group may have had such political misgivings. The opposition was entirely on ecclesiastical grounds and never pretended to go beyond a defense of ecclesiastical interests. The Confessing Church, however, was certainly not the only representative of the conservative

position. Indeed, in one sense it broke with the German tradition when it found itself pushed into activities that constituted resistance against state authority. Equally conservative in its adherence to a theological tradition, the bulk of the church leadership did not go as far as the Confessing Church in its militancy against the encroachments of secular ideology within the church.

Reactions to the Secular Revolution

Within the church, then, we can distinguish three reactions to the secular revolution: a movement of liberal fellow-travellers, a conservative resistance movement, and between them a less militant conservatism containing the bulk of the church bureaucracy. The formal, as it were sociological, character of this typology cannot be emphasized enough. Obviously the Confessing Church did not see itself as a conservative reaction and the "German Christians" abhorred liberalism in its political sense. This does not change the sociological facts and the sociological functions which these groups played in the conflict. What is of interest here is the subsequent developments of the conflict.

At first the full weight of Nazi power stood behind the "German Christian" movement. Shortly after the Nazi accession to power the 28 German provincial churches constituted themselves, for the first time in German history, into a united German Evangelical Church. The position of *Reich* bishop was created and the "German Christians" opened a vigorous campaign to elect their candidate Ludwig Mueller. In this church election the Nazis used all means, including in places the exercise of police intervention, to push the "German Christian" candidate. Not surprisingly, Mueller won the election and was formally instituted in the new office. The climax of the "German Christian" movement can be dated shortly afterwards with a tremendous rally in the *Sportpalast* in Berlin, where the triumph of Nazism within the church was proclaimed with all the trappings of stormtrooper totemism imported from the political area. The "German Christians" considered this a new German Reformation, a break with the "un-German", "Jewish" elements of Christianity, the birth of a faith that was in accordance with the deep demands of German "blood and honor". Concretely this had many implications in terms of open anti-Semitism within the church, the elimination of clergy of any but "Aryan" ancestry, the application of the Nazi *Fuehrer* principle in church government, liturgical reforms in the direction of Teutonic nativism, and other innovations of this kind.

Opposition of the Confessing Church

The front of the Confessing Church against this "new Reformation" came to a head in 1934 at the Ulm conference, when Confessing groups from the entire country met with the leadership of the provincial churches of Wuerttemberg, Bavaria and Hannover. That year was one of repeated theological manifestos directed against the "German Christians", the most famous of which was the so-called Barmen declaration. The "German Christians" were branded as heretics, their doctrine an un-Evangelical return to paganism. Mueller, from his central office in Berlin, continued to push what he called the "integration" of the churches, a term with the double meaning of integration of the provincial churches within the new *Reich* church and integration of German Protestantism as such within the new Nazi society. The stormtroopers and the police interfered repeatedly. There were acts of violence, intimidation, arrests, financial pressure—the stock-in-trade measures of the police state standing behind the "German Christian" movement. All of this resulted mainly in increasing popular support of the Confessing group. And, when this fact became clear to the Nazi leaders, the government line changed.

The End of the Church Conflict

It is a fact seldom admitted in Germany today that the so-called church conflict virtually came to an end in 1935. In that year the Nazi government abandoned its support of the "German Christians", gave up the idea (at least for the time being) of reforming the church on Nazi lines, and strove for a reasonable *modus vivendi* with the conservative church leadership. A *Reich* ministry for church affairs was formed, headed by a Nazi functionary by the name of Kerl. Its avowed policy was one of neutrality between the different factions in the church. Kerl himself referred to his task as one of pacification. It cannot be denied that this new line was quite successful. The "German Christians" steadily decreased in numbers and influence, except in some areas (Thuringia, for instance). Mueller remained in his position until the end of World War II, but he was little more than a figurehead. On the other hand, the Confessing movement also ceased to grow. It remained a minority group within the church, continually harassed by the Nazi authorities and felt as a considerable inconvenience by the more moderate church leaders.

In terms of our original typology, then, the liberal movement of sympathizers with the secular revolution lost importance once the

powerful support of the police state was withdrawn. The conservative opposition lost its importance in the measure of decreased pressure from the other side. The police state itself arrived at its *modus vivendi* not with its own sympathizers in the church ranks, but with the old conservative leadership represented in the ecclesiastical bureaucracy.

It may be remarked here that the development of relations between the Nazi state and the Roman Catholic church is of little interest in terms of our particular problem. Liberalism had been effectively crushed within German Catholicism as far back, at least, as the Modernist controversy of the early 20th century. The Nazi state had to deal from the beginning with a highly integrated church bureaucracy and it did not even attempt the kind of ideological penetration represented by the "German Christians" in the Protestant area. The church bureaucracy lost no time in seeking a *modus vivendi* with the new state. The first international treaty of the Nazi regime was the concordat with the Vatican, negotiated by the then State Secretary Pacelli. Subsequent difficulties between the regime and the church arose largely because the Nazis did not abide by the agreements of the concordat.

Conflict between Soviet Government and Russian Orthodox Church

The early conflicts between the Soviet government and the Russian Orthodox church show a striking similarity to the developments in Nazi Germany.³ In the early years after 1917 the Soviet attitude towards the Orthodox church was one of outright persecution. Undoubtedly the main motivation for this was not so much the atheistic doctrine of the Communist ideology as hostility against the church as one of the pillars of the old regime. In 1918 a number of laws were passed which separated state and church, thus bringing to an end a centuries-old tradition of Russian history. The newly elected Patriarch Tykhon openly opposed these measures, further intensifying the attitude of the government towards the church as a counter-revolutionary institution. This stage of direct persecution came to a head after the famine of 1921, when Tykhon gave orders to Orthodox clergy to disobey the government demand that church property be surrendered to provide funds for famine relief. During this period there were thousands of executions of both higher and lower clergy, and many more thousands were thrown into prison.

It was shortly afterwards, in 1923, that there emerged a liberal movement within the Orthodox church, closely parallel to that of

the "German Christians", with the avowed aim of reforming the church in such a way that it could exist in the new Soviet society. The movement called itself the "Living Church" and was dominated by the brilliant personality of one man, Professor Vedenskij, who had taught theology in Petrograd. The "Living Church" did not seek to create a Communist church. In this respect it represents a less radical accommodation to the revolutionary ideology than the "German Christians"; indeed, the doctrinal atheism of Communism would have made that degree of accommodation very difficult. While its theological basis remained Orthodox, the "Living Church" proposed radical changes intended to modernize the church. These proposals included the abolition of episcopal celibacy, thus enabling the lower clergy to rise to the higher church positions, the election of priests by the congregations, the use of modern Russian in the liturgy, and others. Above all the "Living Church" declared its enthusiastic support of the Soviet state, denounced the existing church bureaucracy of reactionary and counter-revolutionary activities, and even went so far as to say that Communism expressed the highest social manifestation of Christianity in our time.

Soviet Government Response to "Living Church"

The Soviet government responded instantly and highly favorably to the approach of the "Living Church" leaders. Under the protection of the government the "Living Church" called together a church council (*sobor*), which solemnly deposed Tykhon from all his offices and elected Vedenskij as archbishop of Moscow. The council, while not recognized as canonical by any Orthodox church outside Russia, was enthusiastically welcomed by the Communist press as inaugurating a new stage in the relations between the revolution and the church. The secret police was used in several localities to force Orthodox congregations to accept "Living Church" clergy and to silence the opposition of the conservatives.

Despite this government support, partly perhaps because of it, the movement never achieved wide popular support. The masses of the faithful continued to follow Tykhon and the traditional leadership. In 1923, however, Tykhon himself changed his attitude. The events surrounding the "Living Church" council may have influenced him to do this. Apparently without pressure from the government, Tykhon came to the conclusion that the church would have to adapt itself to the new society in order to exist at all. He issued a solemn state-

ment of loyalty to the Soviet state and promised full cooperation with it.

By then the government realized the artificial and unpromising character of the "Living Church" movement. With the characteristically speedy reversal of policy of totalitarian governments it dropped the entire experiment and officially accepted Tykhon's declaration of loyalty. The "Living Church" began to disintegrate almost immediately. There followed a period of rapprochement between church and state, spearheaded on the part of the former not by liberal radicals but by the conservative leadership itself.

Rapprochement between Soviet Government and Orthodox Church

It would be an oversimplification to say that this ended the conflicts between the two institutions. After Tykhon's death in 1925, under the *pro tem* patriarchate of Sergius, there were renewed clashes, arrests, difficulties of various sorts. Sergius himself was imprisoned in 1926-27. Yet the period of bloody persecution was coming to an end. The Soviet government recognized the church as a reality to be dealt with, at least for the time being. And, as in Nazi Germany, the *modus vivendi* was established with the conservative church bureaucracy. Not all conservatives were happy about this rapprochement. The Russian church in exile, which in 1921 had organized at the Carlowitz synod in Yugoslavia, still had the support of many believers within the country. In an act of considerable courage a number of imprisoned bishops sent a letter to Sergius, accusing him of hypocrisy and betrayal in his support of the Communist state. Sergius answered with the traditional means of church hierarchy—excommunication and the ban. And the Soviet government supported him with its police power.

The rapprochement reached its climax when Russia was attacked by Nazi Germany. The church emerged as a patriotic institution calling for an all-out war effort against the invaders. In 1943 Sergius was formally elected to the patriarchate, an act the canonicity of which was accepted by most Orthodox churches outside Russia. Here the rapprochement had become an alliance. The ugliest consequences of this alliance were soon to be seen in the help given by the Orthodox church to the persecution of Roman Catholics by the Communist authorities in the reconquered territories of the Ukraine and in the new Communist states of eastern Europe. This expansion of the *modus vivendi* into a partnership did not happen, of course, in the case of the Protestant church in Nazi Germany.

Analogy of Kulturkampf

It might be doubted whether the inclusion of the *Kulturkampf* in this discussion is warranted, since Bismarck's Germany was certainly not a totalitarian state in the 20th-century sense. Yet we find in these events an interesting foreshadowing of things to come, a struggle here also between a conservative church bureaucracy and a modern state seeking a kind of ideological unity within its body (the ideal of the German *Kulturstaat*), and willing to use coercion on a church that did not fit into its image of this unity. The parallels with the later totalitarian developments are intriguing.⁴

The *Kulturkampf* was fundamentally an attempt to integrate the Roman Catholic church into the Prussian *Kulturstaat* ideal. It happened immediately after both power complexes involved had reached certain pinnacles of strength: the Council of the Vatican of 1870 and the formation of the German Empire in 1871. In actual fact the conflict took place mainly within the territories of the Prussian crown. Only a few *Reich* laws were passed to curtail Catholic power, such as the law of 1872 banning the Jesuit order from the whole of Germany. It was clear, however, that the Prussian conflict represented a test case. Victory over the church in Prussia would have opened the way to a similar integration throughout the new Empire.

A perusal of the Prussian law gazette during these years shows an almost uncanny similarity with the measures used against recalcitrant churches by Nazi and Communist governments in our own time.⁵ Financial support was withdrawn from refractory Catholic dioceses. Catholic schools were put under direct supervision of state inspectors. Oaths of obedience were demanded from all Catholic bishops. All Catholic theological candidates had to pass a "cultural examination" given by state examiners before receiving their degrees—a striking similarity to the compulsory examinations in Marxism-Leninism demanded in Communist countries today. While police powers were used sparingly compared to more modern dictatorships, there was direct police action and a number of Catholic clergy were briefly imprisoned.

Liberal Role of the Old Catholics

The role of the liberal faction was played by a group which probably did not seek it at first—the Old Catholics. This group had emerged as an opposition to the dogma of papal infallibility proclaimed by the Council of the Vatican. Theologically it was, if any-

thing, more conservative than the position adopted as orthodoxy by the official church hierarchy. Yet it was liberal, in our sense of the word, in its attitude to the larger society. Compared to the "ultra-montane" conservatism of orthodox Catholicism, the Old Catholics were open to the currents of thought moving the larger secular society. They were soon open to cooperation with the state that sought to suppress their theological opponents.

The Prussian government did everything in its power to guarantee Old Catholic ascendancy over the elements in the church that remained faithful to Rome. Laws were passed to force Catholic parishes to allow the use of church buildings for Old Catholic services. Also, the entire property of a parish would pass into the hands of the Old Catholic faction if the latter was found to be in the majority. Needless to say, these measures greatly strengthened the young dissident movement.

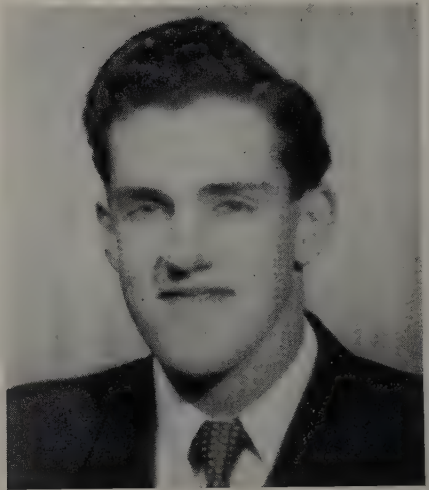
The *Kulturkampf* laws were nullified by the stubborn passive resistance of the great majority of Prussian Catholics. In the 1880's and 1890's most of these laws were repealed. The relationship of the Prussian state and the Roman Catholic church reverted to one of mutual accommodation. The attempt of the government to support the Old Catholics against the orthodox hierarchy was abandoned. Again, a *modus vivendi* was established with the conservative leadership of the ecclesiastical institution.

The Rationale of Compromise

The three cases discussed here, while hardly constituting proof, would appear to point in a direction other than the facile evaluation of religious liberalism referred to above. They tend towards the generalization that, while it is correct that religious liberalism is more vulnerable to ideological infiltration in totalitarian situations, it is religious conservatism and the church bureaucracies representing it which finally come to terms with the secular regime. The rationale of this compromise is to be sought in the principles of *Realpolitik* rather than in any theological formulations. Sociologically speaking, we are faced here with the well-known phenomenon of the persistence of bureaucracies, to which ecclesiastical bureaucracies are no exception.

- (1) A good example of this conservative approach is found in Heinrich Schmid, *Apokalyptisches Wetterleuchten—ein Beitrag der Evangelischen Kirche zum Kampf im "Dritten Reich"* (Munich, Verlag der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche in Bayern, 1947).
- (2) One of the best summaries to date of the Protestant side of the conflict is found in Heinrich Hermelink (ed.), *Kirche im Kampf—Dokumente des Widerstandes und des Aufbaus in der Evangelischen Kirche Deutschlands von 1933 bis 1945* (Tuebingen, Rainer Wunderlich, 1950). Catholic materials may be found in Johann Neuhaeusler, *Kreuz und Hakenkreuz—der Kampf des Nationalsozialismus gegen die katholische Kirche und der kirchliche Widerstand* (Munich, Verlag der Katholischen Kirche Bayerns, 1946).
- (3) Cf. N.S. Timasheff, *Religion in Soviet Russia* (New York, Sheed & Ward, 1942); Efraim Briem, *Kommunismus und Religion in der Sowjetunion* (Basel, Friedrich Reinhardt, 1948).
- (4) Cf. Johannes B. Kissling, *Geschichte des Kulturkampfes im Deutschen Reich* (Freiburg, Herder, 1913).
- (5) Keil & Gallenkamp (ed.), *Gesetz-Sammlung fuer die Koeniglich-Preussischen Staaten* (Berlin, Carl Heymanns, 1895).

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TILlich'S METHOD OF CORRELATION

By DAVID R. MERRITT

Paul Tillich's theological thought is notable not only for its comprehensive structure and freshness of approach, but also for the degree to which the presuppositions and methodology are explicit and are themselves subject to critical examination. Moreover, at a time when rational systems of theology are likely to be regarded with weary skepticism by liberals and anathematising distaste by neo-orthodox, Tillich has produced a system, the very profundity of which has attracted considerable attention to his method.

In approaching the method logically, the crucial issue of the relation of reason to revelation, Tillich has not lined up with either of the two opposed views that have been characteristic of the post World War I western theological world. While liberal theologians have often assumed the identity of reason and revelation, and neo-orthodox theologians have categorically asserted an unqualified distinction between the two, Tillich maintains that reason and revelation are distinct but mutually inter-dependent. Not content to escape the tension between reason and revelation, either by ignoring the differences and postulating unity of the two, or by ignoring one pole

of the tension and asserting the national superiority of revelation. Tillich has accepted the tension. The method of correlation envisages reason and revelation as separate, but in a positive relationship. As an alternative to the liberal—neo-orthodox impasse, it deserves careful examination.

It should not be considered, however, that the method of correlation is something new. Tillich is quite clear that it is not an invention of his. "As method, it is as old as theology. We have, therefore, not invented a new method, but have rather tried to make explicit the implications of old ones, namely, that of apologetic theology."¹ Indeed, Tillich thinks of the method of correlation as the intrinsically appropriate method by which systematic theology may fulfill its apologetic function. He writes,

Systematic theology uses the method of correlation. It has always done so, sometimes more, sometimes less, consciously and must do so consciously, and outspokenly, especially if the apologetic point of view is to prevail. The method of correlation explains the contents of the Christian faith through existential questions and theological answers in mutual interdependence.²

DESCRIPTION OF THE METHOD OF CORRELATION

This last sentence above describes the method of correlation clearly and succinctly. On the one hand, there are analyses of the questions implied in human existence; on the other hand, there are the answers implied in divine self-manifestation, that is, "given" in revelation. The juxtaposition of the two constitutes the apologetic task of theology. Both analysis of the questions of human existence and the formulation of the answers of revelation ("given" in the revelatory events) are theological tasks.

In using the method of correlation, systematic theology proceeds in the following way: it makes an analysis of the human situation out of which the existential questions arise, and it demonstrates that the symbols used in the Christian message are the answers to these questions.³

At this point it is worthwhile to consider a more detailed statement by Tillich of the way in which he uses the method of correlation. The following passage will serve not only to illustrate the application of the method, but also to indicate the complex thought actually involved in what can be stated with apparent simplicity. Tillich writes,

The method of correlation is especially the method of apologetic theology. Question and answer must be correlated in such a way that the religious symbol is interpreted as the adequate answer to a question implied in man's existence, and asked in primitive, pre-philosophical, or elaborated philosophical terms. For instance, the question implied in human finitude is answered in the symbols which constitute the idea of God; or the symbol of revelation answers the questions which drive reason to its own boundary; or the question implied in man's existential disruption and despair is answered in the symbol of the Christ and his appearance under the conditions of existence; or the idea of the divine spirit is interpreted as the answer to the question implied in the tragic ambiguities of life, especially man's spiritual life; or the problems of the meaning of history are answered in the symbol of the Kingdom of God. In all these cases the method of correlation establishes a mutual interdependence between questions and answers. The questions implied in human existence determine the meaning and theological interpretation of the answers as they appear in the classical religious concepts. The form of the questions, whether primitive or philosophical, is decisive for the theological form in which the answer is given. And conversely, the substance of the question is determined by the substance of the answer. Nobody is able to ask questions concerning God, revelation, Christ, etc., who has not already received some answer. So we can say: with respect to man's ultimate concern the questions contain the substance of the answers and the answers are shaped by the form of the questions.⁴

Circular Movement!

The crucial issue raised by this passage concerns the nature of the apparently circular movement of Tillich's thought here. In some way the questions influence the answers and the answers influence the questions. Is this merely going around in circles getting nowhere (albeit slowly!)? Or is this a circular sweep that defines and contains a thought that can be grasped? Or is it something else? Certainly Tillich explicitly states that the thought is circular in some sense. In the first volume of *Systematic Theology* he wrote:

Symbolically speaking, God answers man's questions, and under the impact of God's answers man asks them. Theology formulates the questions implied in human existence, and theology formulates the answers implied in divine self-manifestation under the guidance of the questions implied in human existence. This is a circle which drives man to a point where question and answer are not separated. This point, however, is not a moment in time. It belongs to

man's essential being, to the unity of his finitude with the infinity in which he was created . . . and from which he is separated⁵

It is precisely at this point that Tillich's understanding and use of the method of correlation have been criticised.⁶ It is significant that he felt it necessary to deal with criticisms and misunderstandings of this aspect of his method in the Introduction to the second volume of *Systematic Theology*.⁷ Pointing out that "correlation" is understood as "interdependence of two independent factors," that is, as "a unity of the dependence and independence of two factors,"⁸ Tillich set out to clarify the ways in which existential questions and theological answers are independent and the ways in which they are interdependent. This section of his writings must be regarded as definitive for his understanding of his method at the present time.

Independence of Two Factors

First of all, he insists on the independence of the two factors. The question does not lead to the answer, nor the answer to the question. Neither is the source for the other. There is no way from the human situation to the revelatory answer. At this point Tillich stands firmly with Barth in maintaining that man's reason will not reach God. Tillich insists on the independence of answer and question that he expressed in unmistakable terms in the first volume when he wrote:

The Christian message provides the answers to questions implied in human existence. These answers are contained in the revelatory events on which Christianity is based and are taken by systematic theology *from* the sources, *through* the medium, *under* the norm. Their content cannot be derived from the questions, that is, from an analysis of human existence. They are "spoken" to human existence from beyond it. Otherwise they would not be answers, for the question is human existence itself.⁹

The "Theological Circle"

The more difficult aspect of the problem is to understand the ways in which question and answer are interdependent, that is, mutually dependent. Tillich insists that such understanding is possible only within the "theological circle." The method of correlation is the method of *theology*. The description of question and answer is a theological task. The person deriving the question from an analysis of human existence and describing the answers given in revelation is a committed person. He is "committed to a concrete expression of

the ultimate concern, religiously speaking, of a special revelatory experience.”¹⁰ The sphere of his religious commitment includes both existential question and revelatory answer.¹¹ He both participates in the human predicament and receives the revelation. He lives the question and struggles to express the “given” answer. The material of the question is human existence but the form of the question is influenced by the theologian’s commitment. He is engaged in a genuine analysis of the human predicament, but

he cannot help seeing human existence and existence generally in such a way that the Christian symbols appear meaningful and understandable to him. His eyes are partially focused by his ultimate concern, which is true of every philosopher. Nevertheless, his art of seeing is autonomous, for it is determined only by the object as it is given in his experience. If he sees something he did not expect to see in the light of his theological answer, he holds fast to what he has seen and reformulates the theological answer. He is certain that nothing he sees can change the substance of his answer, because the substance is the *logos* of being, manifest in Jesus as the Christ.¹²

The form of the question is thus influenced by the given answer.

The answer is also influenced by the question. In the Introduction to the second volume of *Systematic Theology*, Tillich emphatically insists that the *substance* of the answers—the revelatory events—is independent of the questions. But he states that the form of the theological answer is influenced by the existential question.

If theology gives the answer, “the Christ,” to the question implied in human estrangement, it does so differently depending on whether the reference is to the existential conflicts of Jewish legalism, to the existential despair of Greek scepticism, or to the threat of nihilism as expressed in twentieth-century literature, art, and psychology. Nevertheless, the question does not create the answer. The answer, “the Christ,” cannot be created by man, but man can receive it and express it according to the way he has asked for it.¹³

In brief, the theological answers are dependent for content on the given revelatory events, but are dependent for form on the form of the questions they answer.¹⁴

Tillich’s Change:—1947 vs. 1957

It is interesting to note that Tillich’s statement of 1957 explicitly denies the assertion of 1947. In the earlier article referred to Tillich

wrote, “. . . the questions contain the substance of the answers.”¹⁵ In the latest attempt to clarify his expression of his thought he wrote, “the substance of the answers . . . is independent of the questions.”¹⁶ In both volumes of *Systematic Theology* Tillich has insisted on the independence of the content of the question and the answer (the question is man himself, the answer is the self-manifestation of God) and the interdependence of the form of question and answer. This is the crux of the method of correlation. “In this way an interpretation of the traditional symbols of Christianity is achieved which preserves the power of these symbols and which opens them to the questions elaborated by our present analysis of human existence.”¹⁷

PRESUPPOSITIONS OF THE METHOD

Before considering some criticisms of this method, something must be said regarding the presuppositions involved in it. In maintaining that man and God, reason and revelation, and “question” and “answer” are logically independent but mutually relevant, Tillich is making an ontological assumption. He explicitly denies the possibility of a logical movement (inductive or deductive) from one “side” to the other. He does, however, maintain that a description of either “side” in the terms of the other will show their relatedness. This is an ontological assumption. It cannot be proved. All that is possible is for the reader to agree that the description is adequate and that he “sees” the relatedness, that is, the relevance of the “question” to the “answer”, and vice versa.

Not Discovery but Description of Discovery

This means that the method of correlation is not a method of discovery but of description of what has been discovered. It is not the way someone follows to arrive at faith; it is the method of systematically describing faith or the possibility of faith. It is not the basis for theology but the tool of a system of theology. It is the method by which men already committed, that is, within the theological circle, examine the nature and implications of their commitment. The method of correlation cannot possibly be used by anyone who has not experienced both question and answer. For the method is simply a description of the relatedness of the two. This, of course, does not mean the method has no relevance for an uncommitted man. Indeed, the apologetic usefulness of the method of correlation coincides precisely with the degree to which the underlying ontological

assumption is valid, that is, with the possibility of a person aware of the question of his existence seeing the Christian events of the Christ as "answer."

It is one of the virtues of Tillich's thought that he has made this ontological assumption explicit. He writes:

No method can be developed without a prior knowledge of the object to which it is applied. For systematic theology this means that its method is derived from a prior knowledge of the system which is to be built by the method.¹⁸

In the Introduction to the first volume of *Systematic Theology* Tillich wrote:

The doctrine of the theological circle has a methodological consequence: neither the introduction nor any other part of the theological system is the logical basis for the other parts. Every part is dependent on every other part.¹⁹

And speaking specifically of the method of correlation, he stated:

It is itself a theological assertion, and like all theological assertions, it is made with passion and risk, and ultimately it is not different from the system which is built upon it. System and method belong to each other and are to be judged with each other. It will be a positive judgement if the theologians of the coming generations acknowledge that it has helped them, and nontheological thinkers as well, to understand that Christian message as the answer to the questions implied in their own and in every human situation.²⁰

The importance of correctly understanding Tillich's method at this point must be emphasized. As the following discussion of criticisms of the method of correlation will show, Tillich's critics have sometimes misunderstood him at just this point. The method of correlation is not a new type of philosophical and theological eclecticism. It is not a way of getting philosophers and theologians to shake hands and promise to fight no more. It is uncompromisingly theological. It is the way the theologian goes about his primarily apologetic task. Above all it is concerned with the dialectic of the theological circle or ellipse.

CRITICISMS OF THE METHOD

In Kegley and Bretall's *The Theology of Paul Tillich*, George F. Thomas provides an essay entitled, "The Method and Structure of

Tillich's Theology." In this he describes the method of correlation and commends its apologetic usefulness, but enters the following criticisms that are worth giving in some detail. Intending to call in question the adequacy of Tillich's understanding of his method, he writes:

Could his philosophical analysis of the human situation and the "questions" implied in it have been made by anyone but a Christian? Could it have been made, for example, by a naturalist or a Platonic idealist? It seems clear to me that at a number of points it could not.²¹

Again, his Christian faith manifests itself in the way the "questions" implied by the philosophical analysis are stated. For example, in reason the conflict between "autonomy" and "heteronomy" leads to the "question" of "theonomy," he says, and the "anxiety" due to the finitude of existence leads to the "question" of "God" as the ground of meaning and courage. Naturalistic philosophers, in contrast, can see nothing wrong with the "autonomy" of reason, and cannot understand why the "anxiety" of finite man should cause him to seek an "escape from reality" in religious faith.²²

Is it not because his analysis of the "situation" is largely that of a Christian *philosopher* that his "answer" as a Christian *theologian* is relevant to it? Thus the fruitfulness of the "method of correlation" depends upon the enlightenment of the philosophical reason by the Christian faith. If this enlightenment has not come to a philosopher his analysis of the human situation will lead him to raise questions quite different from those which can be answered by the Christian message. The "final revelation" in Christ not only provides us with the "answers" but also makes us aware of our real situation and of the "questions" we ought to ask.²³

What Tillich's Definition Means

About these statements much could be said, but two comments must suffice. First, what is here urged as grounds of objection to Tillich is explicitly stated by Tillich himself—as this paper has made clear. Of course, "Christian faith manifests itself in the way the questions implied in the philosophical analysis are stated." This is what correlation as defined by Tillich means. The form of the answer influences the form of the question. The theologian, to quote Tillich, "cannot help seeing human existence and existence generally in such a way that the Christian symbols appear meaningful and understandable to him."²⁴ His conceptual approach to the question is suggested

by the answer. Nevertheless, the question itself and the answer itself, are separate and independent.

It is no valid criticism of Tillich's method, therefore, to point out that there is a *two-way* relationship in his thought between "question" and "answer"—the interdependence is intended. Thomas' criticism, however, goes beyond this and raises the question as to whether Tillich's clear distinction between form and content in both "question" and "answer" can always be completely substantiated. Certainly at times the impact of the revelatory events upon the Christian *prior* to the formulation of the "question" in its appropriate form is so great that the "question" appears merely rhetorical. This issue will receive further consideration below. Meanwhile, it is important to appreciate the strength of Tillich's insistence that the method of correlation is a theological method designed to demonstrate the relatedness of revelatory events and human existence, but not to lead from one to the other.

Secondly, Thomas seems to underestimate the significance of Tillich's ontological presuppositions and therefore he does not take seriously enough Tillich's conviction that the question of existence developed by philosophers, qua philosophers, may be the *same* questions as those developed by the committed man, the theologian. But only the theologian, experiencing both question and answer, can develop the relatedness between question and answer, that is, state the question in the *form* of the answer or the answer in the *form* of the question. For example, Tillich claims that purely philosophical criticisms of naturalistic claims for the autonomy of reason will lead to the question of reason. This is true for Sartre or Mounier as for Tillich. But only the man in the theological circle can correlate this question with the answer of revelation.

"The Question of Reason"

One may object, however, as Thomas did, that non-existential or non-personalistic philosophers in fact do not arrive at the "question of reason." At this point Tillich and Thomas differ in their understanding of the significance of this observation. Thomas suggests that the reason naturalistic philosophers claim autonomy for reason is their failure to perceive the implications of Christian revelation casting light on the true nature of Logos. Tillich, on the other hand, points to essentially philosophic defects—failure to be aware of hidden ontological pre-suppositions which, if faced, involve the recognition of the ultimate inadequacy of reason.

In this regard it is valuable to consider the way in which Tillich describes the theologian who asks the "question" under the impact of the "answer" as engaged in pure philosophical analysis of existence. The theologian is in no sense "given" the question because he is "given" the answer. The question cannot be derived from the answer. In receiving the answer all the theologian knows is that there is a question which he must discover. He does not discover it by deduction from the answer but by analysis of the human predicament. And this analysis of the human situation is genuine philosophically—"his act of seeing is autonomous, for it is determined only by the object as it is given in his experience."²⁵ In the Introduction to the second volume of *Systematic Theology*, Tillich powerfully states this aspect of the theologian's task of asking the question under the impact of the answer. He writes:

In order to do so, he must participate in the human predicament, not only actually—as he always does—but also in conscious identification. He must participate in man's finitude, which is also his own, and in its anxiety as though he had never received the revelatory answer of "eternity". He must participate in man's estrangement, which is also his own, and show the anxiety of guilt as though he had never received the revelatory answer of "forgiveness". The theologian does not rest on the theological answer which he announces. He can give it in a convincing way only if he participates with his whole being in the situation of the question, namely, the human predicament. In the light of this demand, the method of correlation protects the theologian from the arrogant claim of having revelatory answers at his disposal. In formulating the answer he must struggle for it.²⁶

A More Complex Criticism

A more complex criticism of the method of correlation is presented by John Herman Randall, Jr., in his discussion of Tillich's ontology.²⁷ Randall's objection basically is that Tillich's distinction between the theoretical and the existential is too sharply dualistic and results in a failure to appreciate the existential character of theory.²⁸ Randall writes

This comes out most clearly in his final position on the relations between philosophy and theology, his so-called "method of correlation", in which he finds that philosophy must go to theology for the answers to its own questions. Unless this be a mere matter of terminology, it clearly does

not take the "existential" character of theory seriously enough.²⁹

Randall as a philosopher has no intention of acknowledging, humbly or otherwise, that all he has is what he received as a theological hand-out. "The difficulty arises not when I discover that as a philosopher I am a theologian, but when I find that to be a good philosopher and answer my questions I must be a Christian theologian."³⁰ Randall agrees with Tillich in his delineation of the polarities of reason in existence but disagrees that these polarities are rationally insoluble antinomies.³¹ He writes:

In other words, the finite and relative character of human reason is clear, as well as that it confronts difficulties and "ambiguities". That any adequate intellectual method, however, faces ultimate self-contradiction Tillich has not established. He contends that only "revelation" can solve these contradictions.³²

Randall especially objects to Tillich's predilection for the Christian revelation. "That particular revelation, philosophically considered, would be one hypothesis among others, and would have to be tested philosophically."³³

Replies to Criticism

To this criticism two replies are necessary. First, I think Tillich would accept the challenge that he must show that "any adequate intellectual method . . . faces ultimate self-contradiction" or, more correctly, (for Randall's use of the word "adequate" begs the question) that there is no intellectual method adequate to provide the answers to the questions of existence. He and Randall would fight this out as philosophers. If Randall could produce an "adequate intellectual method" by which the polarities of reason and existence were overcome, then there would be no "question of reason" and hence no need for the "answer of revelation." In the two volumes of *Systematic Theology*, what Tillich attempts to do is to show that past and present contenders for the role of "adequate intellectual method" are not what they claim, and, in fact, are based on ontological presuppositions that lead to the "question" of reason. Tillich's experience of reason in existence is in terms of what Randall terms a rationally insoluble antimony—reason is fractured and poses a "question". Randall states that this description is not an adequate description of his experience of reason. This is an I-challenge-you-to-a-duel

situation. The weapons are philosophical. One of the duelists happens to be a theologian.³⁴

Secondly, Randall and Tillich are speaking to one another over the boundary of the theological circle. Tillich is not curious about revelation—he is committed to it and is attempting to demonstrate its relevance to the human situation. The Christian revelation for him is not “one hypothesis among others” and, indeed, it is not possible for it, quo revelation, to be “philosophically considered”. It is a matter of ultimate concern. It is a matter of theology. The method of correlation is the method of a systematic theologian. It is the way a theologian sets forth the relationship between an analysis of existence and the Christian revelation. It is not the way a philosopher moves from existential questions to theological answers. Randall is right to protest his disinclination to do this. But then this is not what Tillich is suggesting. For the philosopher as such all this method can do is to raise the “questions” and therefore the possibility of “answers”. Randalls objections, therefore, are not directed against the method of correlation, as such, but against the philosophical analysis of existence—as described in the previous paragraph. A discussion of the adequacy of Tillich’s thought on this point in the light of Randall’s criticisms is not the purpose of this paper.

Light on the Critical Problem

A statement that throws light on the problems raised by these criticisms of the method of correlation and that demonstrates a firm grasp of what this method really is, is given by James Luther Adams at the conclusion of a discussion of Tillich’s dialectic. He points out that while Tillich’s method aims at consistency and may be systematically applied, it is not properly described as a method of inquiry.

It is not a method for the discovery of truth in the sense of “a metaphysical-deductive or of an empirical inductive approach” projecting and testing hypotheses. Indeed, Tillich asserts that, like every method, it *presupposes* an ultimate concern, “an *a priori* of experience and evaluation.” Thus it would appear that he does not start with a method of investigation, trying to *find* something he does not have; his dialectic is rather a principle for showing the implication of what he already *has*. As a theologian he studies other disciples in order to clarify his concepts and to gain a better intellectual grasp of them, or in order to discover anew and make clear the relevance to the human situation of what he *has*. (This is the method of correlation.)³⁵

SOME IMPLICATIONS OF THE METHOD

Much could be said concerning the implications of the method of correlation for Tillich's thought. As it is the method used throughout all parts of his *Systematic Theology*, its relevance to any part of this work could be shown. However, the attention of this paper will focus on five points that seem especially significant.

1. *Tillich's System of Theology*

It seems perilously close to insisting on the obvious to state that Tillich's method has profound implication for the entire system of his theology. Yet because the implications are so far-reaching this must be emphasized as basic in any attempt to understand his thought. He writes:

The structure of the theological system follows from the method of correlation. The method of correlation requires that every part of the system should include one section in which the question is developed by an analysis of human existence and existence generally, and one section in which the theological answer is given on the basis of the sources, the medium, and the norm of systematic theology. This division must be maintained. It is the backbone of the structure of the present system.³⁶

For example, in the section "Existence and Christ", one part analyses man's existence and formulates the questions posed by the ambiguities and estrangement that this analysis shows. The other part formulates the correlated answer, "The Christ". The consistent application of the method of correlation accounts for the structure of all five sections of Tillich's *Systematic Theology*. Without an understanding of the method, an understanding of *Systematic Theology* is impossible.

2. *The Place of Natural Theology*

In our day the arena of natural theology is littered with the corpses of theologians. For many of us, it seems that the choice open to us is to side with the "Yes" giant of liberalism (groggier now than 40 years ago) or the "No" giant of Barthianism. At any rate, short of retiring from the field, pigmy independents seem likely to get trampled on. The significance of Tillich's contribution here is that the method of correlation offers a new approach to this old controversy.

Tillich is firmly with the Barthians in denying the possibility of

natural revelation. But unlike them he insists on the importance of theology of nature. He writes:

There is revelation through nature; but there is no natural (rational) revelation. And there *is* theology dealing with nature; but there is no natural theology. Reason elaborates but does not produce theological propositions.³⁷

Natural theology, or better, theology dealing with nature, is the "question" side of the correlation. It can show the possibility of "answers" but it cannot give "answers". There is not natural revelation.³⁸ Tillich's position here is most clearly shown in his discussion of the traditional arguments for the existence of God.

The arguments for the existence of God neither are arguments nor are they proof of the existence of God. They are expressions of the *question* of God which is implied in human finitude. This question is their truth; every answer they give is untrue. . . . The arguments for the existence of God analyze the human situation in such a way that the question of God appears possible and necessary.³⁹

The theology of nature must be correlated with the theology of revelation.

3. *The Relation of Kerugmatic to Apologetic Theology*

On this matter also, Tillich shows he stands on the boundary between liberalism and neo-orthodoxy.⁴⁰ He is as critical of the type of theology that loses the kerugma "in the relatives of the situation"⁴¹ as he is of the claim that the kerugma can be proclaimed independently of the situation.⁴² Tillich stresses the importance of taking both the kerugmatic and apologetic aspects of theology seriously. Neither kerugma nor situation should be neglected. The key to their relationship he finds in the method of correlation. He writes:

It is further necessary to seek a theological method in which message and situation are related in such a way that neither of them is obliterated. If such a method is found, the two centuries' old question of "Christianity and the modern mind" can be attacked more successfully. The following system is an attempt to use the "method of correlation" as a way of uniting message and situation. It tries to correlate the questions implied in the situation with the answers implied in the message. It does not derive the answers from the questions as a self-defying apologetic theology does. Nor does it elaborate answers without relating them to the questions as a self-defying kerugmatic theology does. It correlates questions and answers, situation and message, human existence and divine manifestation.⁴³

A reading of Tillich's sermons readily indicates the power of this method. The Christian revelation is not presented as just "other" but as "other" and relevant. "Revelation becomes more revealing the more it speaks to man in his concrete situation."⁴⁴ Tillich is consistently critical of the non-existential attitude of Protestant theologians who preach "objective truth" unrelated to man's situation.⁴⁵

In summary, it might be said that Tillich sees no necessary clash between apologetic and kerugmatic theology. In fact, each needs the other for its completion.⁴⁶ Apologetic theology is "answering theology."⁴⁷ If it is to answer something, it is also kerugmatic. The method of correlation brings the two aspects of theology into a complementary relationship.

4. *Preaching*

In discussing the relation of the words of a preacher to the Word, Tillich states that a constellation of four factors must be present if the spoken words are not to be mere human speech without divine manifestation in it.⁴⁸ The four factors are: the meaning of the words spoken, the power with which they are spoken, the understanding of the listener, and his existential reception of the content.⁴⁹ The Word depends on the preacher and listener in correlation.⁵⁰

Tillich views preaching, therefore, as a particular application of his understanding of the complementary nature of kerugma and situation. There will be no perception of the answer unless there is awareness of the question that is itself the possibility of "answer." Tillich, I think, would agree strongly with the point of view expressed by Abraham Heschel when he wrote, "The law is a problem to him who thinks that life is a commonplace. *The law is an answer* to him who knows that *life is a problem*."⁵¹ In preaching there must be a two-way relationship between message and situation. If the kerugma is relevant to the situation of the hearer the method of correlation is also a method for the preacher.

5. *Religious Education*

In the two volumes of *Systematic Theology*, Tillich mentions religious education only once⁵² and this is in relation to the method of correlation. In the passage referred to he maintains that one cannot either "derive the divine self-manifestation from an analysis of the human predicament" or "derive the question implied in human existence from the revelatory answer."⁵³ He writes,

This [latter] is impossible because the revelatory answer is meaningless if there is no question to which it is the answer. Man cannot receive an answer to a question he has not asked. (This is, by the way, a decisive principle of religious education.) Any such answer would be foolishness for his, an understandable combination of words—as so much preaching is—but not a revelatory experience.⁵⁴

Many religious educators would warmly accept the assertion that religion must be “related to life”—a popular contemporary phrase with the “right” sound but ambiguous enough to be safe. I suspect, however, that few would be as eagerly receptive to the implications of this assertion in the sense Tillich is making it. For if one takes Tillich seriously, any consideration of man and nature that does not lead to the “questions” of existence is making the Christian “answer” irrelevant—or at least avoiding the possibility of seeing its relevance. “Man cannot receive an answer to a question he has not asked.” If religious educators are concerned to paint a picture of the world and life as orderly, reliable, comfortable, “open,” and rationally comprehensible, etc., then this is a way of showing the Christian revelation is unrelated to life. Religious educators, in this country particularly, have long used natural theology as a source of comfortable, security-reinforcing conclusions. Tillich’s method of correlation seems to me promising as a means of stating a radically different approach to this issue. It could provoke a much needed reconsideration of the presuppositions and methodology of contemporary religious education.

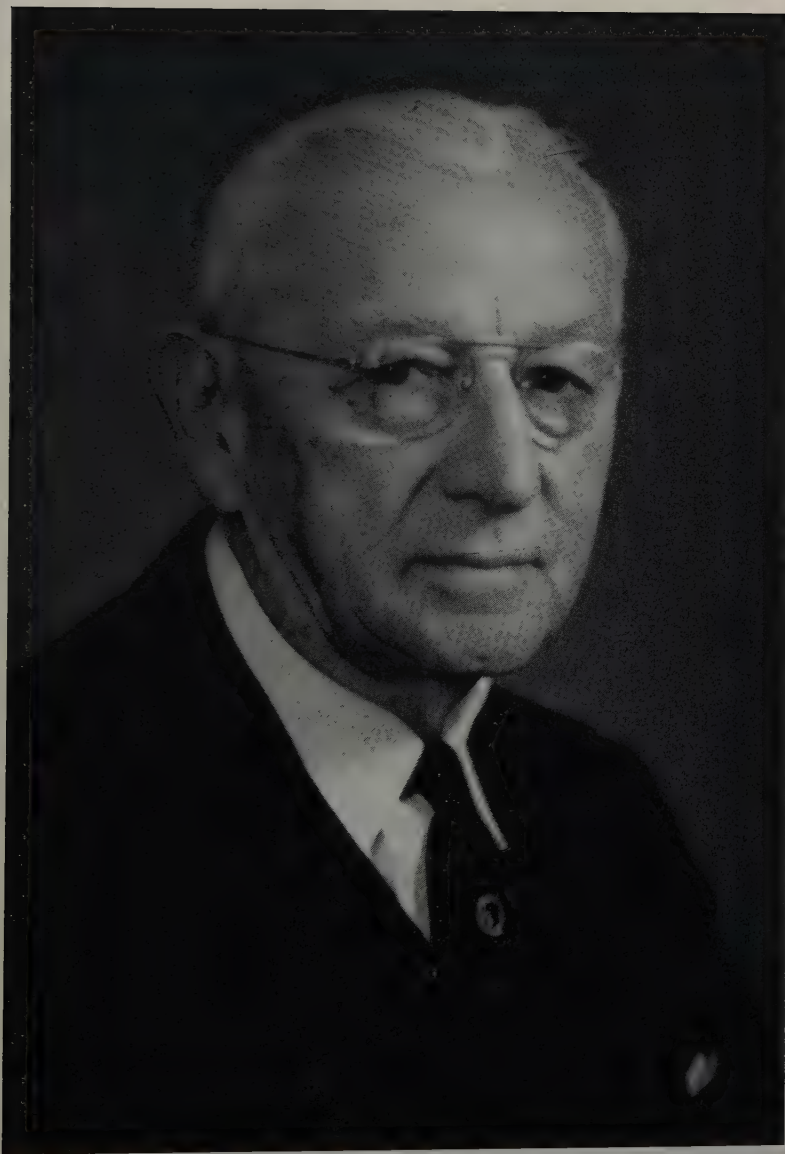
6. *Final Evaluation*

This paper has described the method of correlation and suggested certain issues for which the implications of the method are especially significant. The final evaluation of the method must be in terms of its functional adequacy, that is, whether it does correlate the Christian revelation and the human predicament. In the particular instance of Tillich’s use of it, this evaluation will vary from person to person, depending on their reception of his systematic presentation of theology. To conclude with Tillich’s own statement,

System and method belong to each other and are to be judged with each owner. It will be a positive judgement if the theologians of the coming generations acknowledge that it has helped them, and won theological thinkers as well, to understand the Christian message as the answer to the questions implied in their own and in every human situation.⁵⁵

NOTES

- ¹ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*. The University of Chicago Press, 1957, Vol. II p. 16.
- ² Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*. The University of Chicago Press, 1951, Vol. I, p. 60.
- ³ *Ibid.*, p. 60.
- ⁴ In the *Journal of Religion*, Vol. XXVII, no. 1, January 1947. Quoted in W. U. Herberg, *Four Existentialist Theologians*, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1958, pp. 279-280.
- ⁵ *Systematic Theology*, I, p. 61.
- ⁶ See, for example, George F. Thomas in Charles W. Kegley and Robert W. Bretall, eds., *The Theology of Paul Tillich*, New York; The Macmillan Co., 1952, Herman Randall, Jr., *Ibid.*, pp. 141 and later in this paper.
- ⁷ See *Systematic Theology*, II, pp. 13-16.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 13.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, I, p. 64.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, II, p. 14.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, II, pp. 14-15.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, I, pp. 63-64.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, II, pp. 15-16.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, I, p. 64.
- ¹⁵ See Will Herberg, *op. cit.*, p. 280.
- ¹⁶ *Systematic Theology*, II, p. 15. Cf. "It is . . . wrong to derive the question implied in human existence from the revelatory answer." *Ibid.*, p. 13.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, I, p. 64.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, I, p. 60.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, I, p. 11.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, I, p. 8.
- ²¹ In Kegley and Bretall, *Op. Cit.*, p. 102.
- ²² *Ibid.*, p. 102.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, p. 103.
- ²⁴ *Systematic Theology*, I, p. 63.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, I, p. 64.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, II, p. 15. However, compare Tillich's statement that "each of the Biblical symbols drives inescapably to an autological question". Paul Tillich, *Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality*, University of Chicago Press, 1955, p. vii.
- ²⁷ In Kegley and Bretall, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-161.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 141.
- ²⁹ *Loc. cit.*
- ³⁰ *Loc. cit.*
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 149.
- ³² *Loc. cit.* It should be noted that while Randall may feel that Tillich has not established this point, Tillich certainly makes the claim. If Randall, or any one else, can produce an "adequate intellectual method" Tillich's position will need drastic revision. See the following paragraph.
- ³³ *Loc. cit.*
- ³⁴ I cannot resist adding that according to Randall the theologian happens to be a duelist! Randall, *op. cit.*, p. 141.
- ³⁵ In Kegley and Bretall, *op. cit.*, p. 301.
- ³⁶ *Systematic Theology*, I, p. 66.
- ³⁷ In Herberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 277-278.
- ³⁸ See Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, I, p. 119.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 205-206.
- ⁴⁰ It may be noted that Tillich criticizes the validity of calling Barth "neo-orthodox." See *Systematic Theology*, I, p. 4.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, I, p. 5.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, I, p. 7.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, I, p. 8.
- ⁴⁴ Tillich, *Biblical Revelation and the Search for Ultimate Reality*, p. 3.
- ⁴⁵ See Tillich, *The Courage to Be*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Pr., 1952, p. 132.
- ⁴⁶ *Systematic Theology*, I, pp. 5-6.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, I, p. 6.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, I, p. 159.
- ⁴⁹ *Loc. cit.*
- ⁵⁰ It may be noted that the emphasis thus is on reception and involves the possibility of neglecting the objective character of the Word.
- ⁵¹ Abraham J. Heschel, *God in Search of Man, A Philosophy of Judaism*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, 1955, p. 299. Heschel is speaking of Tovah. For an impressive treatment of the basic affirmations of Christian faith based on the method of correlation, see Rexel L. Howe, *Man's Need and God's Action*, Greenwich: The Seabury Press, 1953.
- ⁵² And once he refers to the "religious teacher." *Systematic Theology*, I, p. 159.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*, II, p. 13.
- ⁵⁴ *Loc. cit.*
- ⁵⁵ *Systematic Theology*, I, p. 8.



ELMER ELLSWORTH SCHULTZ JOHNSON

Mr. Hohlfeld, who is Professor of Linguistics in the Kennedy School of Missions, delivered this address at the Memorial Service for Professor Johnson on October 21, 1959 in the Chapel.



ELMER ELLSWORTH SCHULTZ JOHNSON (1872-1959)

By J. MAURICE HOHLFELD

It has been said that, "Character is what we are. Reputation is what other people think we are."

It is quite possible to have a good character and yet have a poor reputation. Such was the case in the life of Abraham Lincoln, the sixteenth President of the United States of America. Here was a man of noble character, but whose reputation during his lifetime, left much to be desired.

On the other hand, there are those who enjoy a good reputation but unfortunately their character is not always synonymous with their reputation. Picturesque quality words, such as "shady character, questionable character" are sometimes used to describe these people.

In the third place, the God of history often sends forth into the world, men who not only have good characters but who are known also for their good reputations. The one we honor today was one of those great, grand, good men of sterling character and unspotted reputation. . . . Elmer Ellsworth Schultz Johnson.

Text from Living Scripture

The text for our Memorial Address is not biblical in source. Rather, it is taken from living scripture written on the tablets of the heart and

mind of our friend and loved one. The words were uttered on one of those delightful automobile trips which was routed through the pleasant Schoharie Valley of Central New York State. Naturally, Elmer Johnson would point out along the way all matters of reference geographical, geological, horticultural and historical. As he gazed at the hills and mused, he spoke of a great inner urge. Said he, "I always want to climb the heights and see what is on the other side."

This was his testimony. This was the statement of a life-giving principle that motivated him ever since childhood. This was the confession of one who was brought up in the hills, who loved the hills, who traveled through the hills on his weekly trips from Hereford to Hartford. That is, from Hereford, Pennsylvania to Hartford, Connecticut, passing through Berks County into the Lehigh Valley, across the historic Delaware and then on up into the Mountain Lakes region of New Jersey, onward to the lordly Hudson which he met at Bear Mountain. Finally, as a thirsty seeker for truth, quenching his thirst as the sun goes down on those beautiful Litchfield hills that meant so much to him. And all along the way there were friends and legends and challenges in those hills!

The Source of His Curiosity

Whence developed that innate curiosity for knowledge, for wisdom, for truth? Perhaps it began when he was a little toddler gathering around the family circle as they listened to Grandfather Isaac Johnson tell about the family name. The young Elmer was fascinated with the fact that his last name, "Johnson" was the anglicized form of the Dutch (Yansen) which was spelled "Jansen."

What a thrill it was for him to learn that the Jansens came from Holland to Pennsylvania in 1684! This was the same time that William Penn was conducting his Holy Experiment in the City of Brotherly Love (known as Philadelphia), some fifty miles south of New Berlinville, Berks County, where Elmer was born on June 26, 1872.

As a child he showed interest in the family background and did not tire at the recitation of the "begats". It may be, as our religious educators now tell us, that the first three years of a child's life are the most important ones in preparing for the educative process. Who knows but that the genealogist in him had its beginning in that farmhouse where they talked about family names with respect and reverence?

Thus, he was really a true member of the Pennsylvania Dutch. After all, his name came from Holland. Yet, Elmer Johnson would

be the first one to advise you quickly that the common use of the words "Pennsylvania Dutch" was a corruption of the form "Pennsylvanien-Deutsch." The Pennsylvania Dutch as such, are not Dutch but Deutsch. That is, Germanic in origin. While he did have Dutch ancestry on one side he was also truly Pennsylvanien-Deutsch. For on his mother's side he had a line of forebears who came to Pennsylvania in 1734, in order to escape the religious persecutions they were experiencing in Silesia and Saxony in Southern Germany.

A Consecrated Mother

It was at his mother's knees that he first learned the great lessons of the faith. Not only did Susanna Schultz Johnson instruct the children in the Judaeo-Christian heritage, but she also instilled in Elmer and his younger brother Jacob a firm belief in the great doctrines of the adherents. Especially did Elmer remember the salient teachings concerning the pre-eminence of Christ . . . the Christ of the Sermon on the Mount. The mother would recall the hard struggles the family had in the past in order to live. For that reason, she emphasized the value of individual liberty. And the utmost scruple was taken to preserve such liberty.

Further, it was during those formative years that he first heard of Caspar von Schwenkfeld, the Silesian nobleman, who was a contemporary of Martin Luther. Schwenkfeld, the lesser known of the two, was the Reformer of the Middle Way. He advocated that those of the organized Church should follow the way of pietism in order to arrive safely home in their spiritual pilgrimage.

Young Elmer heard these stories of the Reformation, which did not end there but continued on through the next two centuries when the believers, often known as the "Confessors of the Glory of Christ" (and not Schwenkfelders), had to flee the Fatherland and sail to the New World in 1734. It was his grandfather's great-grandfather, George Scholtze, who left Neider Harpersdorf in Lower Silesia, when he was only twenty-three years of age, and came with the group to continue the family line which goes on to this day in Pennsylvania and elsewhere. It was in that farmhouse setting that the future historian said he received his first lessons in Church History, even before he went to school.

The Young Miller Discovers Books

Naturally, a wise mother would want her boy to grow up and "get an education." She kept that objective in her heart, but alas, she

passed away when he was only eleven years old. This meant that Elmer had to leave school and go to work on his father's farm. Later, he apprenticed himself to his uncle, Joseph K. Schultz, for the purpose of learning the trade of a miller.

For three years (1890-1893) he worked hard, "driving the flour route"... delivering and selling flour to the housewives and then returning to the mill to sweep up the floor and make himself generally useful.

One day, after spending many hours at work, he happened to see two books on the floor of the mill. As he picked them up, he discovered they were school books. One was a geometry book, the other was a Latin book. As he read he felt that someone was watching over his shoulder. The first impulse was to hide the books in the flour bags. When he looked around he saw one of his uncles who lived on an adjacent farm. "Elmer, do you want to study?" the uncle asked. Of course the answer was in a strong affirmative. "Well", said the uncle, "I'm afraid we've neglected you. Your mother prayed that you might go to school and you are going to go."

The upshot of the whole matter was that an uncle who lived nearby and the uncle who owned the flour mill got together and went over to consult with grandfather Amos S. Schultz. After the meeting, the chairman of the self-appointed committee of three, the grandfather, came to the flour mill the next day at one o'clock to see Elmer. He had heard that his grandson was working at the mill. This he thought was all to the good. It was not time wasted because now he was mature. He knew the value of time, the value of a dollar and also, what life meant. He would be able to study much better now, if he should start on the pathway of formal education.

Then, the patriarch uttered some words of wisdom that often mark the village seer. He said, "Here behind the wall of the hills we are still provincial. We need now one to go and bring the world back to us." No doubt those words did much to quicken the spirit of the young man who had a great yearning to climb the heights and see what was on the other side.

A Plan for Education

The educational plan was laid out by the grandfather. He suggested that Elmer think big and plan for the next ten years. There would be three years at Perkiomen Seminary. This in those days did not mean a graduate institution for preparing men and women for the ministry, but rather, a college-preparatory school just opening its

doors under the new sponsorship of the Schwenkfelders of Pennsylvania.

After those three years, Grandfather Amos felt it would be best to spend the next four years at Princeton University; for there he would find a "good school with good men to study under." Then they talked about New England and the different religious ideas that were being propagated up there. Again, the wise old man came forth with words of wisdom as he said, "Go to the Hartford Theological Seminary. You go there, you'll be safe."

Well . . . he was safe here and he made it safe for many a student-generation who can look back and call him "blessed" for having opened their minds to the great drama of the Church during the Mediaeval and Reformation Periods and the relationship of those times to the present day.

Thus, there would be three years at Perkiomen, four years at Princeton and three years at Hartford. What must the young man have thought of the plan? After all, he was now twenty years of age and he hadn't started his college preparatory work. That means he would be twenty-three before he entered college. Grandfather Amos also realized his own days were numbered. So he put all the money for the educational plan into Elmer's hands and trusted that it would be handled by a worthy steward. Handle it wisely he did. For instance, when Elmer was preparing to enroll at Princeton, instead of taking the train down to Philadelphia and then out to Princeton Junction, he rode his bicycle all the way from his home in Pennsylvania to Old Nassau, a distance of some fifty miles!

Unfortunately, Grandfather Amos did not see the lad enter into the higher institutions of learning. Still he had the satisfaction of hearing good reports coming back from Perkiomen. It was rumored that he memorized the entire volume of Barnes' *History of the United States*, a standard textbook used in many of our public schools. The grandfather died just seven weeks before the first class to complete the three-year prep course held its Commencement Exercises. The old man did not live to hear his grandson Elmer give one of the orations. It was entitled, "Christian Citizenship" (June 28, 1895).

On to Princeton!

The scene now shifts to Princeton. There he had many new worlds to conquer. During the summer of 1896 between his freshman and sophomore years, he was invited by Dr. O. S. Kriebel, the principal of Perkiomen Seminary (and also pastor of the Upper District which

at that time included the three meeting-houses at Kraussdale, Washington and Hosensack), to speak to the Society of Schwenkfelders and choose any text he wished. That which meant a great deal to the young Princetonian was Ephésians 3:19 . . . "And to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

He entitled the sermon, "*The Crest and Crowning of the Searching Soul.*" This was the first sermon he ever preached. The last time he preached that sermon was just three years ago, on the last Sunday of August, 1956. This was the sixtieth anniversary of the first presentation.

The sermon began with a quotation from H. G. Wells, . . . "To this day the Galilean is too great for our small hearts." Then the sophomore from Princeton said, "We do not comprehend the love there was in Jesus. Possibly it is too great a word for our minds to comprehend. It certainly surpasses knowledge." At the end he made a plea that the worshippers should pray with conviction "to be filled with the fulness of God." "Do not forget that to be filled with the fulness of God is a very rugged prayer" he said. "Study it, think of it. Remember, God is always with us."

As one reads that sermon once more, he is impressed with the wearability of the preacher. He wore well. What did rub off was not his loss but our gain. Ask any ministerial friend to repeat a sermon that was preached only ten years ago. The chances are that you will receive a reluctant answer, probably in the negative. The clergyman will answer that there seems to be little relevance of what was said a decade ago when repeated in our present times. Yet, Elmer E. S. Johnson had such a grasp on eternal truth and lasting values, that what he preached in 1896 was still the same Good News in 1956, for he knew whereof he spoke. Certainly our colleague and friend was filled with the fulness of God, even in those student days.

The days at Princeton were memorable ones. Ever since his freshman year he was admired and respected by all his classmates.

Matrimony—and Hartford

After graduating from Princeton in 1899, he turned northward and came to Hartford. But this time he did not come alone. That Fall he experienced another graduation service. This was a graduation from bachelorhood to the blessed estate of Holy Matrimony. During those Princeton years it seems that absence made the heart grow fonder for a certain young lady back in Palm, Pennsylvania. She too,

was a daughter of the Society of Schwenkfelders, whose forefathers had also come to the New World from Silesia in 1734. On September 7, 1899, Agnes Schultz Gerhard and Elmer E. S. Johnson were married. They lived happily for the next forty-seven years.

As he began his theological studies, not only were his classmates impressed with his depth and breadth of knowledge; but, also, the Faculty began to take note. For there were giants in the land in those days. A listing of the Faculty would furnish many names for Who's Who. There were Beardslee and Geer, Gillett and Hartranft, Jacobus and MacDonald, Mitchell and Nourse, Paton and Pratt. These were the men who guided him into greater fields of usefulness.

The degree of Bachelor of Divinity was granted at the Commencement of 1902. Some time before this, he received a call to serve in Philadelphia, where the Society of Schwenkfelders had organized a mission in the northern part of the city. The congregation called themselves the First Schwenkfelder Church of Philadelphia and advertised that "all services would be in the English Language."

Pastor and Editor

E. E. S. Johnson served as pastor from September 1902 to July 1, 1904. Always creative, always willing to share his wealth of knowledge with even the lowliest of men, he founded and became the first editor of the denominational, monthly journal known as "*The Schwenkfeldian*". In setting forth the policy of the organ, he said in the first editorial, "The spirit of liberty and independence of thought have always characterized the mind and heart of the true Schwenkfeldian disciple. The facts of our history and the fundamentals of our faith, together with the current events in all our churches will be recorded and discussed in the columns of this journal."

Of course, being an historian at heart, there appeared a one-and-one-half page article on Schwenkfeldian history. Ever since that issue of Volume 1:1 down to the current issue of Volume 56:4, there have been one or more articles dealing with "the facts of our history." The latest article is the third in a series on "*Schwenkfeldian Pietistic Thought in Colonial Pennsylvania*." Lest we think that the organ was aimed at the presentation of a narrow sectarianism, may we hasten to say that the periodical not only deals with the Reformer of the Middle Way, but has included also other historical gems such as the famous Barclay Correspondence conducted by the English Quaker, Robert Barclay, who sought information to support the belief that the Quakers' origin went back to the teachings of Schwenkfeld for

doctrine and mode of worship. Then there were reports of the World Church, with the many Councils and Conferences and Reports that affect the Society of Schwenkfelders as well as the great multitudes in the high Churches and those scattered in between.

Research Fellow

The pastorate in Philadelphia was a busy one, gathering in the numerous unchurched residents who had moved into the new housing developments of that day. But it was a short pastorate of less than two years. A request by the young pastor for a leave of absence for one year, starting July 1, 1904, was granted by the congregation. The reason for the request . . . Elmer Johnson had received a call from the Hartford Theological Seminary to serve as Research Fellow in Reformation History.

Thereon hangs a tale that would take hours to tell. We are not only dealing with the "wall of the hills". We are now climbing the mountains. Indeed, here is one of the most stupendous projects that any institution could ever attempt to undertake. It was the task of bringing to light some understanding of the missing elements in that dynamic period of history known as the Reformation. The forward-looking faculty of the Hartford Theological Seminary and the representatives of the Schwenkfelders (who numbered less than a thousand in those days) united their forces to give to the world the *Corpus Schwenkfeldianorum*. Here one finds the collected writings with texts, translations, documentation and analyses—linguistic, historical and theological—of Schwenkfeld, the founder of Spiritual Pietism in Southern Germany.

Birth of the Corpus Schwenkfeldianorum

It was just seventy-five years ago this past August (1959) that the idea of the Corpus was initiated. Eighteen Hundred Eighty-Four was the 150th Anniversary of the landing of the Schwenkfelders in Pennsylvania. Dr. Chester David Hartranft, then a Professor of Church History at this institution, wrote a circular letter to the community of adherents in which he said:

Ought we not to commemorate the name of Caspar Schwenkfeld, especially at this day, when there has been such a marked restudy of his theology and when a far juster estimate of his views and character has been formed? What have we done to show our veneration for his piety, our admiration for his learning, our regard for him as the origi-

nator of a most profound religious movement, of which you, brethren are the most direct representatives, but whose influence has reached into innumerable channels of modern thought and society? It is due to ourselves to devise some competent expression of our gratitude for the man, who, of all the leaders of the Reformation, penetrated furthest into the spirit of religious liberty, who asserted its principles with unequivocal faithfulness and unflinching courage. We who inherit the results of these principles, and whom God has favored with so opposite a lot, cannot withhold our recognition of his spiritual greatness; nay, do we not owe these principles themselves some emphatic reassertion? The world has let Schwenkfeld sleep for over three hundred years, and has never yet done him justice. Shall his followers allow others to be pioneers in the work of readjustment and restoration? Surely the most befitting monument to our fathers would be the publication of their works in full, those of Schwenkfeld first, and then the whole body of Schwenkfeldian literature from the Reformation to our day. Such a Corpus Schwenkfeldianorum should certainly not be inferior to the noble editions of the works of Luther, Melancthon, Zwingli and Calvin. You know that Schwenkfeld's own works exist in very imperfect form, the printed editions are full of grave errors, while no inconsiderable quantity of his writings still exists in MSS. The same is true concerning the productions of his followers. Surely to bring this before the world would be a more suitable memorial of the greatness of our fathers and of our gratitude to God than to raise a shaft; nor could we make a nobler contribution to theological science and righteous living.

So the project got under way. Not only did the Seminary appoint Dr. Hartranft and later E. E. S. Johnson to this area of research but those in authority also sponsored the services of Otto Bernhard Schlutter to help expedite matters in getting the material into print.

Friends Encourage the Project

We must not forget the wide circle of friends from Hartford who contributed their prayers and moral support and their substance, too. There was the gift of a trustee and benefactor, Newton Case, Esq. and Roland Mather, another trustee. An immeasurable debt was owed to Dr. Augustus C. Thompson, Dr. Ernest Cushing Richardson, Eldridge Torrey, President of the Board of Trustees, President William Douglas Mackenzie and Dean Melancthon Jacobus.

Back home, the people in the valley were informed of the developments by the local newspaper which Elmer read almost every day of his life even unto the end. The news sheet "*Town and Country*",

wrote these words about his new position as Research Fellow by saying:

In performing his duties, Rev. Johnson will at once proceed to Wolfenbüttel, near Brunswick, Germany, meet his teacher and chief, surrounded by MSS on all sides, gird his loins and go to work. He will make himself fully familiar with the scheme of work of Dr. Hartranft. He will doubtless delve and dig into musty old volumes and handle faded and crumbling papers and books, two, three and four centuries old. He will breathe the atmosphere of the Reformation and in thought, mingle, jostle and elbow with those sturdy heroes of the Church of God that made this period of God world-renowned.

Johnson Joins "Der Alte"

It was on July 16, 1904 that Mr. and Mrs. Johnson and their baby son and only child, Rolland, sailed on the "Zeeland" of the Red Star Line for Antwerp. Elmer was now on his way to help the "Old Man". These words are used with respect in reference to Dr. Hartranft because they are the nearest we can come to the German, "der Alte". Unfortunately, the American-English rendering of "the old man" sometimes carries with it a weak, senile and disrespectful connotation. The German "der Alte" is marked with respect and reverence, and sometimes endearment, as in the case of Frederick the Great, who was called affectionately, "der alte Fritz".

But "der Alte" was weakening. In fact, a few months before Elmer received his call from Hartford to serve as Associate Editor of the Corpus Schwenkfeldianorum, Dr. Hartranft, due to declining health, resigned from the Seminary which he had served since 1878, first as professor, later as President, and then assigned to research. By vote of the faculty Dr. Hartranft was made an Honorary President. After Dr. Hartranft died on December 30, 1914, on the eve of World War I, Dr. Johnson became the Editor-in-Chief of the Corpus, this post he retained even after he returned to Hartford after the war.

Contribution to 75th Anniversary Volume

There was never a dull moment for him during those Wolfenbüttel days. As he supervised the gathering of the manuscripts for the Corpus, he also found time to distribute his energies in several related areas. While he was overseas, his colleagues in the States were celebrating the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Hartford Theological

Seminary, formerly known as the Theological Institute of Connecticut. To do justice to the occasion, the Faculty and Alumni made contributions to an Anniversary Volume edited by Lewis Bayles Paton. These studies in Christian thought and work during that period were brought together under the title of "*Recent Christian Progress.*" (1909).

From Wolfenbüttel, Germany, came an article on "*The Reformation Period*". To be sure, it breathes all the freshness of the research project on the Corpus. Indeed, the news of the progress being made by Hartranft and Johnson caused one of America's foremost Germanic scholars, Dr. Marion Dexter Learned of the University of Pennsylvania, to declare that if the editors succeeded in completing the seventeen or eighteen volumes of the Corpus, it would be "one of the greatest literary and scientific undertakings that America has ever known." It would "stand side by side with the great Weimar edition of Luther's works and with the great outcoming edition of Zwingli" (1911).

During this same period, Elmer Johnson became interested in Adam Reisner, the diplomat, linguist, historian and poet of Mindelheim. This versatile Christian layman was the amanuensis of Caspar Schwenkfeld. The latter, in writing to his friends, often called him "Unser Adam". The data, documentation and the presentations made by Elmer Johnson concerning Adam Reisner were considered to constitute an original contribution to the field of knowledge. Hence, the dissertation he submitted while in Germany was accepted by the faculty as partial fulfillment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. This degree he received in 1911.

House-Arrest

When news of the outbreak of World War I came to Wolfenbüttel, Dr. Johnson refused to leave the books he had collected for the library. He remained there during the entire war until 1919, under house-arrest. During that time he was treated with the utmost hospitality. The villagers told him that if the U.S.A. declared war on Germany, the German people would build a wall of iron around him and his material and give him all facilities which would enable him to continue his work. When this did happen Elmer wrote, "We are accorded the greatest kindness and everyone spares no pains to comply with numerous requests." After the close of the war, the German Government furnished every facility for getting the accumulated material shipped safely to the States.

Professor at Hartford

The professorial period at Hartford began in 1922. He was assigned to the teaching of Medieval and Reformation History. In 1924 he was given the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity by Franklin and Marshall College, Lancaster, Pennsylvania. This was in recognition of his scholarship as well as of his contributions to the culture of the Pennsylvania Germans.

He was elevated to full Professor in 1928. In 1934, the Two-Hundredth Anniversary of the landing of the Schwenkfelders, he became the Waldo Professor of Church History. He was supposed to retire in 1940, but due to difficulties of his successor, Dr. Matthew Spinka, in making arrangements to leave Chicago, Dr. Johnson stayed on the faculty until after his seventieth birthday in 1942.

The Seminary Historian

The score of years from 1922 to 1943 were outstanding ones for him and for many of us. He became the Seminary Historian. Every week he would take a small group of students on an historical pilgrimage to East Windsor Hill, across the Connecticut River. There he would show the young neophytes the red stone marker from the original building of the Theological Institute, now imbedded in the wall of the lower entrance to the High School. At the back of the school is the old graveyard where Professor Johnson would point out the resting place of Bennett Tyler, the first President and Professor of Christian Theology in the Theological Institute. Then too, there was the grave of the Reverend Asahel Nettleton, whose letters together with those of Tyler's were brought to light by Elmer Johnson and carefully placed in folders. This is why he insisted on an Archives Room for the Foundation. The trip to East Windsor Hill would end with a walk down Main Street and the telling of tales concerning the houses in which the learned founders lived.

Again, the Seminary Historian would go west into the Connecticut hills. Quite often he would stop at the little cemetery in Cornwall. What would Elmer Johnson tell his class today as he would try to impress upon them that history is not something of the past but is like a rear-view mirror of an automobile? One occasionally takes a look backward as he is going forward. He would probably tell his students that they should know something of the background of the new Fiftieth State that has become part of the Union. He would tell them about Hawaii and then looking at the long, flat stone lying over an old grave, he would read:

IN
MEMORY OF
HENRY OBOOKIAH
A NATIVE OF
OWHYHEE

HIS ARRIVAL IN THIS COUNTRY GAVE RISE TO THE FOREIGN MISSION SCHOOL OF WHICH HE WAS A WORTHY MEMBER. HE WAS ONCE AN IDOLATOR, AND WAS DESTINED FOR A PAGAN PRIEST, BUT BY THE GRACE OF GOD AND BY THE PRAYERS AND INSTRUCTIONS OF PIOUS FRIENDS HE BECAME A CHRISTIAN. HE WAS EMINENT FOR PIETY AND MISSIONARY ZEAL, WHEN ALMOST PREPARED TO RETURN TO HIS NATIVE ISLE TO PREACH THE GOSPEL, GOD TOOK HIM TO HIMSELF. IN HIS LAST SICKNESS, HE WEPT AND PRAYED FOR OWHYHEE BUT WAS SUBMISSIVE. HE DIED WITHOUT FEAR WITH A HEAVENLY SMILE ON HIS COUNTENANCE AND GLORY IN HIS SOUL.

February 17
1818
AGE 26

Then Elmer would give chapter and verse, documentation and footnotes. His last words probably would be, "Go to the Case Memorial Library and look up the M. A. Thesis by Flokemer on 'The Foreign Mission School at Cornwall'."

Johnson As Speaker

It was only natural that he should be the one to write and deliver memorial sermons for distinguished lives of service here and elsewhere. There are those noble words offered on behalf of Charles Snow Thayer, of Dean Edward Warren Capen of the School of Missions, and others. As a tribute to the living, he contributed to the Duncan Black MacDonald Anniversary Volume, given to the eminent scholar on his seventieth birthday.

Johnson's chapel talks were not only addressed to the mind but also to the heart. There was bound to be a challenge that would often end up with a poem or a stanza or two from a great hymn. One of his favorites was:

Rise up, O men of God!
Have done with lesser things;
Give heart and mind and soul and strength
To serve the King of Kings.

Then to illustrate that the students should be "done with lesser things", he might repeat the time-worn anecdote of the German pastor who didn't feel like preparing the sermon for the following Sunday. The Pastor felt that he would just 'open his mouth on Sunday and let the Holy Spirit tell him what to say. Sunday came and the minister opened his mouth. The Holy Spirit did speak to him and said, "Herr Pastor, Du bist faul gewesen" (Mr. Pastor, you have become lazy). Not only did Elmer Johnson reserve this gem for the students but he would also bring it back on Alumni Days. Here he would meet the students who had graduated some five, ten or more years ago. They were the ones who were facing the temptation of sitting back and taking it easy as they approached middle age.

Interpreter of Civic Charm

Every new student-generation soon came to know that Hartford not only stood for the name of the graduate institution they were attending, but it was also a most pleasant city with a great tradition. The Seminary Historian let this be known. As an adopted son, he seemed to know and care more about the environment surrounding the campus, than many of its native sons. To Elmer Johnson, Hartford meant the bookshops, the University Club, the homes, the schools, the churches, the elm trees, the parks and the landmarks.

For example, one of our faculty members used to teach a course in the natural sciences at Hillyer College. Some years ago, he felt it would be wise for his class to observe the remarkable geological formation which forms the base of Trinity College. As he walked down Zion Street, he was surprised to find another kindred spirit examining the strata of the glacial remains. "Why, Dr. Johnson, what are you doing here?" asked the instructor. He soon learned that Elmer Johnson made annual trips to that site in order to refresh himself with the wonders of creation. It would not be amiss to say that Dr. Johnson never detached the creation from the Creator.

Broad in Christian Concern

Concerning the expression of his Christian faith, it can be said that every aspect was vitally important to him. He was the first Secretary of the Schwenkfelder Board of Missions which was organized in 1895. The Schwenkfelders, realizing that their numbers were small, still wanted to take part in the World-outreach of the Church. Inasmuch as each meeting-house was a unit unto itself, the people followed the congregational pattern in matters of polity. For that reason,

it was only natural that they should consider cooperation with a larger, organized group such as the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Here is another story of ecumenical encounter over the last sixty years, as the Schwenkfelder Churches work hand-in-hand with missionaries sponsored jointly by them and/or the Congregational-Christian Churches. Further, in addition to his Seminary duties, Professor Johnson is listed in our annual catalog for many years as a member of the Faculty of the Kennedy School of Missions. He taught the History of South America in the Department of Latin-American Studies.

While commuting from Hereford to Hartford, there were week-ends to consider. The Hereford Mennonite Church at Bally, Pennsylvania, needed a pastor. Inasmuch as all of the Schwenkfelder Churches were supplied at the time, he accepted the call. He stayed for twenty-five years. He could have continued for another decade but he resigned in order that his successor could be installed with proper care and decorum.

He held many posts among the Mennonites. He was Chairman of the Historical and Publication Committee of the Eastern District Conference. He was also Secretary and President of the Pennsylvania-German Society, a member of the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania as well as of our neighboring Connecticut Historical Society.

A Genius for Friendship

As our own Board of Trustees has said in appreciation of his life, "He had a genius for friendship. Wherever he went he found and made friends and his unquenchable enthusiasm for history, local, personal as well as ecclesiastical, stirred even the most prosaic."

Truly, he belonged to everybody, to Schwenkfelders and to Mennonites, to low church and to high church, to Eastern Church and to Western Church, to Catholic and to Jew, all of whom were God's children to him. He was ecumenical even before the word had been popularized as in these latter days.

How shall we evaluate such a rich, full life, lived so close to God? The Director of the Schwenkfelder Library writes of his predecessor, Dr. Johnson, by saying, "His interests and enthusiasms touched life at so many points, that a full appraisal of his influence and achievements can never be calculated. It was a life that embraced many careers and achieved eminence in them all—as teacher, pastor, scholar, educator, historian, horticulturist—and perhaps most important of all—friend of man."

It was quite a heartbreak for many of his Princeton classmates to realize that he would not be able to be with them for the Sixtieth Reunion of the Class of '99. They recalled that his "unusual experiences and colorful contacts" made every conversation an "uplifting educational experience." His sense of humor and keen awareness of the purely human phases of existence made every exchange of ideas with him diversional as well as stimulating."

There was something lovable about this man. He was a good man, a real Christian gentleman and a scholar. Indeed the words of the Indian poet might have been written for Elmer Johnson when he said, "After you left my house, I found the footprints of God." (Sir Rabindanath Tagore)

"Wenn Ich Christum Habe . . ."

In a little cemetery in the hills of Berks County, at Clayton, Pennsylvania, one finds a marble shaft that towers some nine feet above the ground. It was erected in 1918 on the spot formerly occupied by the pulpit of the old Washington Meeting-House. On one side of the shaft at the base is the inscription, "Sacred to the memory of the dead whose remains repose in this consecrated ground and who worshipped God here according to the faith and teachings of Caspar Schwenkfeld". On another side, one reads in German, "Wenn ich Christum habe, bin ich nicht traurig." This is the equivalent of the Latin motto of Schwenkfeld, "Nil Triste-Christo Recepto" (If I have Christ, I am not sad).

It was also the motto of another disciple and interpreter of Schwenkfeld . . . Elmer Ellsworth Schultz Johnson . . . who knew the love of God which surpasses knowledge and who was filled with all the fullness of God. For he was one who could say with the Psalmist, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills." Then the question, "From whence cometh my help?" The answer, "My help cometh from the Lord." Surely, he has received his reward. He has climbed the heights and has seen what is on the other side.

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Le Coran et la Revelation Judeo-Chretienne.

By D. Masson, Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient Adrien-Maisonneuve, Paris, 1958. 2 volumes, pp. x, 829, paper. Price 7,200 frs. or \$14.70.

Reviewed by ELMER H. DOUGLAS

Contemporary inter-dependence or inter-relatedness of peoples professing different and often contradictory faiths is obvious. The specific inter-relatedness of faiths is not always so apparent. Such is the case in respect of the three monotheistic systems: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. This scholarly work by D. Masson, therefore, is welcome as an aid to awareness of mutual indebtedness as well as of unique distinctiveness.

The author does not propose to undertake a theological, exegetical or historical study. The aim is rather to examine the religious and spiritual elements of the Qur'an and to compare them with Christian and Jewish texts contained in Scriptures and in writings that appeared up to the time of Muhammad (d. A.D. 632). The work, then, should be evaluated with these limits set by the author in mind.

Neither is the presentation apologetic or controversial. Objectivity in textual examination is observed. The concern is clarification of

similarities rather than exposition of differences, through divergencies are duly noted. The following paragraph translated from the Introduction explains the author's intention:

"It is clear from the sacred text Muhammed was certain of having been sent by God to confirm and to complete the revelation granted already to Moses, to the Prophets and to Jesus. The Qur'an would then be the completed expression, absolutely perfect and in the Arabic language, of the divine Word already retained in part in the Torah and the Gospel. Consequently it is permitted to study the Quranic message according to the previously revealed data; it even seems necessary for a more exact comprehension of Islam to seek out, with all due prudence and respect, the elements in it which are common with Judaism and Christianity, and to show the similarity of thought and expression, as well as the dogmatic analogies encountered in these three traditions which have sprung from the same semitic and Abrahamic source." (p. 9)

Necessarily a certain selectivity of textual material accompanies the study; but the author disclaims exhaustive treatment of the sources.

Main Theme, God's Unity

The main theme is God's unity, as stated in the Introduction: "The light which guided Muhammad is comparable with a force which draws him back constantly toward an axis or central pivot: all comes from God, God unique and universal Creator, and all returns to God, Judge and remunerator in the future life. This idea, to which most of the themes treated in the Qur'an lead, constitutes its unity and cohesion." (p. 12)

The same concept of divine unity runs through the five general phases of the subject into which the work is divided: (1) the attributes of God, (2) creation, (3) revelation, (4) the Qur'an considered as primary foundation of laws relative to worship and human acts, and (5) the future life. The all-inclusiveness of the plan of investigation is thus apparent.

The author's customary method is to cite appropriate Quranic verses, adding a brief exegesis and often a semantic explanation, and to compare these with Biblical passages or texts from the Fathers or other New Testament or Rabbinical literature. Occasionally later authorities, for example Thomas Aquinas or Pseudo-Dionysius, are evoked for elucidation or support.

This procedure provides insights into the approximation of notions common to the three monotheistic faiths, but leaves the reader with

the feeling that pertinent elements have been omitted. For example, in discussing God's goodness as one of His attributes, the author illustrates by various Scriptural sources the creative and live-giving principle of God, shows the concurrence of the Scriptures in proclaiming God as Master, Lord and exalted King, extols God's providence in caring for His creatures, and substantiates God's mercy, love and faithfulness. Yet the author's statement, "The New Testament, centered on the person of Christ, is considered by the Christians as the supreme manifestation of the love and mercy of the all-powerful God toward His creatures," and a reference to II Thess.3:3 are hardly adequate as an exposition of the love of God as manifested in the teachings, life and death of Jesus. But even this should be evaluated in the light of the author's self-imposed limits of investigation.

Christian Doctrine vs. Quranic Passages

In the section on the Trinity the author is hard put to conciliate Christian doctrine with clearly contradictory Quranic passages. The latter, it is maintained, "in no way attack the dogmas of the Trinity and the Incarnation as professed by the Church." (p. 87) The crucial question is, of course, what does the Church profess? Or, what did the Church profess? Though it may be argued that heretical Christian ideas which were circulating in Muhammad's time may be responsible for Muslim misunderstandings of fundamental Christian beliefs, and in spite of the serious effort to explain that "threeness" has no numerical connotation, (p. 96) acceptance of the Trinity on the part of Muslims is hardly to be expected. Blatant contradictions will remain. Therefore the problem continues to resist solution.

Similarly in respect of other phases of this investigation, the data of Islamic sources will continue to be at variance with those of non-Muslim faiths. And the partisans of each will claim a monopoly of authenticity. Denial of differences and contradictions would be disloyalty to facts. Antagonisms are not mitigated by closing the eyes to their causes as if they were non-existent. Facile declarations such as, "all religions are alike; we all worship the one God," may be a palliative to slothful intellectual effort or a pretext for reluctance to engage in the struggle for truth, but they fail to eradicate fundamentally contrary theses. The clear Quranic affirmation, "They did not kill him and they did not crucify him," (4:156) will continue to represent Muslim convictions on the fate of Jesus, despite Gospel records to the contrary, as long as the Qur'an remains revealed Scripture to the devout Muslim. (In this connection see the article

entitled "The Qur'an and the Holy Communion" in the *Muslim World*, July, 1959).

Need for Re-interpretation of Christian Truth

These considerations point to the urgency, on the part of Christians primarily, to undertake a re-interpretation of Christian truth in the light of clearly contradictory positions, and to fathom more sympathetically the depths of non-Christian professions. It is to be hoped that the day of text-proof argumentation to substantiate the validity or superiority of one system over another has passed. A new type of apologetic is required, one which includes in its purview inherent contradictions while sincere thinkers strive for mutual understanding. The author's labor of eliciting and analyzing textual material is a step in this direction. Especially to those who are moved to search for harmony rather than conflict, for a *modus vivendi* amidst mutually exclusive ideologies, does the value of finding some common ground on which to stand become apparent. On this basis, if for no other reason, is this comparative study of the literary foundations of the three great monotheistic faiths justified.

It is needless to labor the point that the Christian theology here presented is Catholic in inspiration. The bibliography of French authors is most commendable and useful for further research, while the fewness of non-French authorities should be mentioned as one of its weaknesses. It includes an index of over 500 Arabic terms employed, and indices of references from the Qur'an, Muslim Traditions, Bible, Rabbinical literature and writings from the Church Fathers.

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